

REMARKS

Applicants reply to the Final Office Action dated September 3, 2008 within the three month shortened statutory period for reply. The Examiner rejects all pending claims 1-9. Applicants cancel claims 7-9 without prejudice or disclaimer to filing one or more claims directed to similar subject matter. Applicants add new claims 10-19. Support for the amended claims, new claims, and amendment to the specification may be found in the originally-filed specification, figures and claims, and thus, no new matter is added by the amendments and new claims. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the telephonic Examiner Interview between the Examiner and Applicants' patent counsel on December 3, 2008, wherein the present claim amendments were discussed, including, at least, "a technology provider" and at least, "a contractual requirement embodied in a configuration item."

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1 and 4

The Examiner rejects claims 1 and 4 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent Publication 2003/0120526 by Altman et al. ("Altman"), in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,023,679 to Acebo et al. ("Acebo"), WIPO publication WO 02/29672 by Rosenbluth International ("Rosenbluth"), U.S. Patent No. 5,948,040 to Delorme et al. ("Delorme"), and U.S. Patent Publication US 2001/0029478 by Laster et al. ("Laster"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Altman generally discloses a system for booking travel arrangements. See Abstract. Altman's system includes trip expense approval and a booking function. See paragraphs [0011]-[0015]. Acebo discloses a system for generating pre-ticketed booked travel reservation. See column 4, lines 37-53. Rosenbluth discloses a reverse auction system. See Abstract. Delorme discloses a travel reservation system. See column 6, lines 56-67. Laster discloses systems for conducting online auctions. See Abstract.

Applicants' claim 1 includes, at least, "a point of service terminal...configured to access the travel broker database, the travel history database, and one of the plurality of data distribution

systems selected based on a contractual requirement embodied in a configuration item” as similarly recited in claim 4. This feature is beneficial in the travel industry as many travel providers set contractual requirements with travel agents. For example, if one travel provider has a minimum transaction requirement, a configuration item embodying that contractual requirement enables a system to route more traffic to that particular vendor to help fulfill the requirement. Such minimum transaction or minimum spend contractual requirements could result in the travel consumer receiving a discount on services or the benefit of more attractive terms. For corporate travel consumers, the importance of travel contractual requirements is amplified. Further, with a variety of requirements from a variety of travel vendors, efficient routing of requests is needed to ensure that value is maximized.

In addition, Applicants’ claim 1 includes, at least, “a communication network in communication with a plurality of centralized hub sites, and configured to provide access to a plurality of data distribution systems, a travel broker database, and a travel history database through the hub sites via a technology provider” as similarly recited in claim 4. A technology provider centralizes communications across a broad spectrum of disparate third party systems. For example, various service provider systems (e.g. GDSs, etc) use different hardware components, networks, protocols, software, databases, storage systems, and the like. Thus, conventional systems, like DeLorme, must be configured to communicate with each service provider separately. While DeLorme may generally refer to connecting to multiple travel providers, DeLorme does not disclose how the connections, translations and interfaces are achieved. To achieve this communication using conventional methods, one operating a DeLorme system would need to invest in learning the service provider’s system, building a system to transmit, decode, and receive data, and integrating that component within the DeLorme system. This process would need to be repeated for each service provider. Because the cited references fail to disclose or contemplate, at least, these features, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1 and 4 be withdrawn.

Claims 2-3 and 5-6

The Examiner rejects claims 2-3 and 5-6 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Altman, Acebo, Rosenbluth, Delorme, Laster, and U.S. Patent Publication 2001/0049693 by Pratt (“Pratt”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Altman, Acebo, Rosenbluth, Delorme, and Laster are discussed above. Pratt discloses an automated data processing system using relational database technology. The disclosures and

contemplations of Pratt do not cure the deficiencies of Altman, Acebo, Rosenbluth, Delorme, and Laster.

Dependent claims 2-3 and 5-6 variously depend from independent claims 1 and 4, so Applicants assert that dependent claims 2-3 and 5-6 are patentable for at least the same reasons for differentiating independent claims 1 and 4, as well as in view of their own respective features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that this rejection is withdrawn.

Claims 7 and 9

The Examiner rejects claims 7 and 9 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Altman, Acebo, Rosenbluth, Delorme, Laster and Pratt. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 7 and 9 are now canceled. Applicants respectfully assert that this rejection is now moot.

New Claims

New claim 10 includes, at least, “instructions for communicating with a plurality of centralized hub sites, wherein a communication network is configured to provide access to a plurality of data distribution systems, a travel broker database, a travel history database, and a point of service terminal through the plurality of hub sites via a technology provider” and “instructions for providing the point of service terminal with access to the broker database, the travel history database, and one of the plurality of data distribution systems selected based on a contractual requirement.” As discussed above, those features, among others, are not found in the cited references, individually or collectively. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully assert that claim 10 is patentable for at least the reasons as set forth above with respect to claims 1 and 4, as well as in view of its own respective features.

New claims 11-13 and 15 variously depend from independent claim 10, so Applicants assert that new claims 11-13 and 15 are patentable for at least the same reasons for differentiating the independent claim 10, as well as in view of its own respective features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 11-13 and 15 are allowable.

New claims 14, 16 and 17-19 variously depend from independent claims 1 and 4, so Applicants assert that new claims 14, 16 and 17-19 are patentable for at least the same reasons for differentiating the independent claims 1 and 4, as well as in view of its own respective features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 14, 16 and 17-19 are allowable.

Support for the amended claims and new claims may be found in the originally-filed specification, figures and claims, and thus, no new matter is added by the amendments and new claims. For example, support for a “technology provider” may be found in, for example, paragraphs [0018]-[0020] and [0026]-[0029] and Figure 2 of U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 10/611,037, which is incorporated by reference in the present application. See paragraph [0001] of the present specification.

The amendments to the figures attached herewith add new Figure 5 to this specification. New Figure 5 is identical to Figure 2 of the '037 Application except for the figure number (which in the present specification is now Figure 5) and the labels in the figure (which in the present specification now begin with a “5”). This amendment does not constitute new matter as the '037 Application was incorporated by reference into the present application when originally filed.

The amendments to the specification attached herewith add the disclosures of paragraphs [0018]-[0020] and [0026]-[0029] of the '037 Application to this specification. The new paragraphs in the amendment are identical to paragraphs [0018]-[0020] and [0026]-[0029] of the '037 Application except that they refer to Figure 5 and the labels depicted on Figure 5 as beginning with the number “5.” This difference is necessary to accurately describe Figure 5 of the present specification, which is equivalent to Figure 2 of the '037 Application with the exceptions discussed above. This amendment does not constitute new matter as the '037 Application was incorporated by reference into the present application when originally filed.

In the present application, where a phrase similar to “at least one of A, B, and C” is used in the claims, it is intended that the phrase be interpreted to mean that A alone may be present in an embodiment, B alone may be present in an embodiment, C alone may be present in an embodiment, or that any combination of the elements A, B and C may be present in a single embodiment; for example, A and B, A and C, B and C, or A and B and C.

The claims of the present application are different and possibly broader than the claims pursued in the parent or related applications. To the extent any amendments or characterizations of the scope of any claim or referenced art could be construed as a disclaimer of any subject matter supported by the present disclosure, Applicant hereby rescinds and retracts such disclaimer. Accordingly, the references construed in the parent or related applications may need to be revisited.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are allowable over the cited references. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail or deem that further amendments should be made to improve the form of the claims, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees due to Deposit Account No. 19-2814, including any required extension fees.

This statement does not authorize charge of the Issue Fee.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 12/3/08

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